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Idylls of the Bible

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M O S E S .

A STORY OF THE NILE

THE PARTING.—CHAPTER I.

MOSES.

Kind and gracious princess, more than friend,
I've come to thank thee for thy goodness,
And to breathe into thy generous ears
My last and sad farewell. I go to join
The fortunes of my race, and to put aside
All other bright advantages, save
The approval of my conscience and the meed
Of rightly doing.

PRINCESS.

What means, my son, this strange election?
What wild chimera floats across thy mind?
What sudden impulse moves thy soul? Thou who
Hast only trod the court of kings, why seek
Instead the paths of labor? Thou, whose limbs
Have known no other garb than that which well
Befits our kingly state, why rather choose
The badge of servitude and toil?

MOSES.

Let me tell thee, gracious princess ; 'tis no
 Sudden freak nor impulse wild that moves my mind.
 I feel an earnest purpose binding all
 My soul unto a strong resolve, which bids
 Me put aside all other ends and aims,
 Until the hour shall come when God—the God
 Our fathers loved and worshipped—shall break our
 chains,
 And lead our willing feet to freedom.

PRINCESS.

Listen to me, Moses : thou art young,
 And the warm blood of youth flushes thy veins
 Like generous wine ; thou wearest thy manhood
 Like a crown ; but what king e'er cast
 His diadem in the dust, to be trampled
 Down by every careless foot ? Thou hast
 Bright dreams and glowing hopes ; could'st thou not
 live
 Them out as well beneath the radiaunce
 Of our throne as in the shadow of those
 Bondage-darkened huts ?

MOSES.

Within those darkened huts my mother plies her tasks,
 My father bends to unrequited toil ;
 And bitter tears moisten the bread my brethren eat.
 And when I gaze upon their cruel wrongs

The very purple on my limbs seems drenched
 With blood, the warm blood of my own kindred
 race ;

And then thy richest viands pall upon my taste,
 And discord jars in every tone of song.
 I cannot live in pleasure while they faint
 In pain.

PRINCESS.

How like a dream the past floats back : it seems
 But yesterday when I lay tossing upon
 My couch of pain, a torpor creeping through
 Each nerve, a fever coursing through my veins
 And there I lay, dreaming of lilies fair,
 Of lotus flowers and past delights, and all
 The bright, glad hopes, that give to early life
 Its glow and flush ; and thus day after day
 Dragged its slow length along, until, one morn,
 The breath of lilies, fainting on the air,
 Floated into my room, and then I longed once more
 To gaze upon the Nile, as on the face
 Of a familiar friend, whose absence long
 Had made a mournful void within the heart.
 I summoned to my side my maids, and bade
 Them place my sandals on my feet, and lead
 Me to the Nile, where I might bathe my weary
 Limbs within the cooling flood, and gather
 Healing from the sacred stream.
 I sought my favorite haunt, and, bathing, found
 New tides of vigor coursing through my veins.

Refreshed, I sat me down to weave a crown of lotus
leaves

And lilies fair, and while I sat in a sweet
Revery, dreaming of life and hope, I saw
A little wicker-basket hidden among
The flags and lilies of the Nile, and I called
My maidens and said, "Nillias and Osiria
Bring me that little ark which floats beside
The stream." They ran and brought me a precious
burden.

"I was an ark woven with rushes and daubed
With slime, and in it lay a sleeping child ;
His little hand amid his clustering curls,
And a bright flush upon his glowing cheek.
He wakened with a smile, and reached out his hand
To meet the welcome of the mother's kiss,
When strange faces met his gaze, and he drew back
With a grieved, wondering look, while disappoint-
ment

Shook the quivering lip that missed the mother's
Wonted kiss, and the babe lifted his voice and wept.
Then my heart yearned towards him, and I resolved
That I would brave my father's wrath and save
The child ; but while I stood gazing upon
His wondrous beauty, I saw beside me
A Hebrew girl, her eyes bent on me
With an eager, questioning look, and drawing
Near, she timidly said, "shall I call a nurse?"
I bade her go ; she soon returned, and with her

Came a woman of the Hebrew race, whose
 Sad, sweet, serious eyes seemed overflowing
 With a strange and sudden joy. I placed the babe
 Within her arms and said, "Nurse this child for
 me ;"

And the babe nestled there like one at home,
 While o'er the dimples of his face rippled
 The brightest, sweetest smiles, and I was well
 Content to leave him in her care ; and well
 Did she perform her part. When many days had
 Passed she brought the child unto the palace ;
 And one morning, while I sat toying with
 His curls and listening to the prattle of his
 Untrained lips, my father, proud and stately,
 Saw me bending o'er the child and said,
 " Charmian, whose child is this ? who of my lords
 Calls himself father to this goodly child ?
 He surely must be a happy man."

Then I said, " Father, he is mine. He is a
 Hebrew child that I have saved from death." He
 Suddenly recoiled, as if an adder
 Had stung him, and said, " Charmian, take that
 Child hence. How darest thou bring a member
 Of that mean and servile race within my doors ?
 Nay, rather let me send for Nechos, whose
 Ready sword shall rid me of his hateful presence."
 Then kneeling at his feet, and catching
 Hold of his royal robes, I said, " Not so,
 Oh ! honored father, he is mine ; I snatched

Him from the hungry jaws of death, and foiled
 The greedy crocodile of his prey ; he has
 Eaten bread within thy palace walls, and thy
 Salt lies upon his fresh young lips ; he has
 A claim upon thy mercy."

"Charmian," he said

"I have decreed that every man child of that
 Hated race shall die. The oracles have said
 The pyramids shall wane before their shadow,
 And from them a star shall rise whose light shall
 Spread over earth a baleful glow ; and this is why
 I root them from the land ; their strength is weakness
 To my throne. I shut them from the light lest they
 Bring darkness to my kingdom. Now, Charmian,
 Give me up the child, and let him die."

Then clasping the child closer to my heart,
 I said, "the pathway to his life is through my own ;
 Around that life I throw my heart, a wall
 Of living, loving clay." Dark as the thunder
 Clouds of distant lands became my father's brow,
 And his eyes flashed with the fierce lightnings
 Of his wrath ; but while I plead, with eager
 Eyes upturned, I saw a sudden change come
 Over him ; his eyes beamed with unwonted
 'Tenderness, and he said, "Charmian, arise,
 Thy prayer is granted ; just then thy dead mother
 Came to thine eyes, and the light of Asenath
 Broke over thy face. Asenath was the light
 Of my home ; the star that faded out too

Suddenly from my dwelling, and left my life
 To darkness, grief and pain, and for her sake,
 Not thine, I'll spare the child." And thus I saved
 Thee twice—once from the angry sword and once
 From the devouring flood. Moses, thou art
 Doubly mine; as such I claimed thee then, as such
 I claim thee now. I've nursed no other child
 Upon my knee, and pressed upon no other
 Lips the sweetest kisses of my love, and now,
 With rash and careless hand, thou dost thrust aside
 that love.

There was a painful silence, a silence
 So hushed and still that you might have almost
 Heard the hurried breathing of one and the quick
 Throbbing of the other's heart: for Moses,
 He was slow of speech, but she was eloquent
 With words of tenderness and love, and had breathed
 Her full heart into her lips; but there was
 Firmness in the young man's choice, and he beat
 back

The opposition of her lips with the calm
 Grandeur of his will, and again he essayed to speak.

Moses.

Gracious lady, thou remembrest well
 The Hebrew nurse to whom thou gavest thy found-
 ling.

That woman was my mother; from her lips I
 Learned the grand traditions of our race that float.

With all their weird and solemn beauty, around
 Our wrecked and blighted fortunes. How oft!
 With kindling eye and glowing cheek, forgetful
 Of the present pain, she would lead us through
 The distant past: the past, hallowed by deeds
 Of holy faith and lofty sacrifice.

How she would tell us of Abraham,
 The father of our race, that he dwelt in Ur;
 Of the Chaldees, and when the Chaldean king
 Had called him to his sacrifice, that he
 Had turned from his dumb idols to the living
 God, and wandered out from kindred, home and
 race,

Led by his faith in God alone; and she would
 Tell us,—(we were three,) my brother Aaron,
 The Hebrew girl thou sentest to call a nurse,
 And I, her last, her loved and precious child;
 She would tell us that one day our father
 Abraham heard a voice, bidding him offer
 Up in sacrifice the only son of his
 Beautiful and beloved Sarah; that the father's
 Heart shrank not before the bitter test of faith,
 But he resolved to give his son to God
 As a burnt offering upon Moriah's mount;
 That the uplifted knife glittered in the morning
 Sun, when, sweeter than the music of a thousand
 Harps, he heard a voice bidding him stay his hand,
 And spare the child; and how his faith, like gold
 Tried in the fiercest fire, shone brighter through

Its fearful test. And then she would tell us
 Of a promise, handed down from sire to son,
 That God, the God our fathers loved and worshiped,
 Would break our chains, and bring to us a great
 Deliverance; that we should dwell in peace
 Beneath our vines and palms, our flocks and herds
 Increase, and joyful children crowd our streets;
 And then she would lift her eyes unto the far
 Off hills and tell us of the patriarchs
 Of our line, who sleep in distant graves within
 That promised land; and now I feel the hour
 Draws near which brings deliverance to our race.

PRINCESS.

These are but the dreams of thy young fancy;
 I cannot comprehend thy choice. I have heard
 Of men who have waded through slaughter
 To a throne; of proud ambitions, struggles
 Fierce and wild for some imagined good; of men
 Who have even cut in twain the crimson threads
 That lay between them and a throne; but I
 Never heard of men resigning ease for toil,
 The splendor of a palace for the squalor
 Of a hut, and casting down a diadem
 To wear a servile badge.

Sadly she gazed
 Upon the fair young face lit with its lofty
 Faith and high resolves—the dark prophetic eyes
 Which seemed to look beyond the present pain

Unto the future greatness of his race.
 As she stood before him in the warm
 Loveliness of her ripened womanhood,
 Her languid eyes glowed with unwonted fire,
 And the bright tropical blood sent its quick
 ' Flashes o'er the olive of her cheek, on which
 Still lay the lingering roses of her girlhood.
 Grief, wonder, and surprise flickered like shadows
 O'er her face as she stood slowly crushing
 With unconscious hand the golden tassels
 Of her crimson robe. She had known life only
 By its brightness, and could not comprehend
 The grandeur of the young man's choice; but she
 Felt her admiration glow before the earnest
 Faith that tore their lives apart and led him
 To another destiny. She had hoped to see
 The crown of Egypt on his brow, the sacred
 Leopard skin adorn his shoulders, and his seat
 The throne of the proud Pharaoh's; but now her
 Dream had faded out and left a bitter pang
 Of anguish in its stead. And thus they parted,
 She to brood in silence o'er her pain, and he
 To take his mission from the hands of God
 And lead his captive race to freedom.
 With silent lips but aching heart she bowed
 Her queenly head and let him pass, and he
 Went forth to share the fortune of his race,
 Esteeming that as better far than pleasures
 Bought by sin and gilded o'er with vice.

And he had chosen well, for on his brow
 God poured the chrism of a holy work.
 And thus anointed he has stood a bright
 Ensample through the changing centuries of time

CHAPTER II.

It was a great change from the splendor, light
 And pleasure of a palace to the lowly huts
 Of those who sighed because of cruel bondage.

As he passed

Into the outer courts of that proud palace,
 He paused a moment just to gaze upon
 The scenes 'mid which his early life had passed—
 The pleasant haunts amid the fairest flowers,—
 The fountains tossing on the air their silver spray,—
 The statues breathing music soft and low
 To greet the first faint flushes of the morn,—
 The obelisks that rose in lofty grandeur
 From their stony beds—the sphynxes gaunt and
 grim,
 With unsolved riddles on their lips—and all
 The bright creation's painters art and sculptors
 Skill had gathered in those regal halls, where mirth
 And dance, and revelry, and song had chased
 With careless feet the bright and fleeting hours.

He was leaving all ; but no regrets came
 Like a shadow o'er his mind, for he had felt
 The quickening of a higher life, as if his
 Soul had wings and he were conscious of their growth ;
 And yet there was a tender light in those
 Dark eyes which looked their parting on the scenes
 Of beauty, where his life had been a joyous
 Dream enchanted with delight ; but he trampled
 On each vain regret as on a vanquished foe,
 And went forth a strong man, girded with lofty
 Purposes and earnest faith. He journeyed on
 Till palaces and domes and lofty fanes,
 And gorgeous temples faded from his sight,
 And the lowly homes of Goshen came in view.
 There he saw the women of his race kneading
 Their tale of bricks ; the sons of Abraham
 Crouching beneath their heavy burdens. He saw
 The increasing pallor on his sisters cheek,
 The deepening shadows on his mother's brow,
 The restless light that glowed in Aaron's eye,
 As if a hidden fire were smouldering
 In his brain ; and bending o'er his mother
 In a tender, loving way, he said, " Mother,
 I've come to share the fortunes of my race,—
 To dwell within these lowly huts,—to wear
 The badge of servitude and toil, and eat
 The bitter bread of penury and pain."
 A sudden light beamed from his mother's eye,
 And she said, " How's this, my son ? but yesterday

Two Hebrews, journeying from On to Goshen,
 Told us they had passed the temple of the Sun
 But dared not enter, only they had heard
 That it was a great day in On ; that thou hadst
 Forsworn thy kindred, tribe and race ; hadst bowed
 Thy knee to Egypt's vain and heathen worship ;
 Hadst denied the God of Abraham, of Isaac,
 And of Jacob, and from henceforth wouldst
 Be engrafted in Pharaoh's regal line,
 And be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter.
 When thy father Amram heard the cruel news
 He bowed his head upon his staff and wept.
 But I had stronger faith than that. By faith
 I hid thee when the bloody hands of Pharaoh
 Were searching 'mid our quivering heart strings
 Dooming our sons to death ; by faith I wove
 The rushes of thine ark and laid thee 'mid
 The flags and lilies of the Nile, and saw
 The answer to that faith when Pharaoh's daughter
 Placed thee in my arms, and bade me nurse the
 child

For her ; and by that faith sustained, I heard
 As idle words the cruel news that stabbed
 Thy father like a sword."

"The Hebrews did not hear aright ; last week
 There was a great day in On, from Esoan's gate
 Unto the mighty sea ; the princes, lords
 And chamberlains of Egypt were assembled ;
 The temple of the sun was opened. Isis

And Osiris were unveiled before the people .
 Apis and Orus were crowned with flowers ;
 Golden censers breathed their fragrance on the air ;
 The sacrifice was smoking on the altar ;
 The first fruits of the Nile lay on the tables
 Of the sun : the music rose in lofty swells,
 Then sank in cadences so soft and low
 Till all the air grew tremulous with rapture.
 The priests of On were there, with sacred palms
 Within their hands and lotus leaves upon their
 Brows ; Pharaoh and his daughter sat waiting
 In their regal chairs ; all were ready to hear
 Me bind my soul to Egypt, and to swear
 Allegiance to her gods. The priests of On
 Drew near to lay their hands upon my head
 And bid me swear, ' Now, by Osiris, judge
 Of all the dead, and Isis, mother of us
 All,' that henceforth I'd forswear my kindred,
 Tribe and race ; would have no other gods
 Than those of Egypt ; would be engrafted
 Into Pharaoh's royal line, and be called
 The son of Pharaoh's daughter. Then, mother
 Dear, I lived the past again. Again I sat
 Beside thee, my lips apart with childish
 Wonder, my eager eyes uplifted to thy
 Glowing face, and my young soul gathering
 Inspiration from thy words. Again I heard
 Thee tell the grand traditions of our race,
 The blessed hopes and glorious promises

That weave their golden threads among the sombre
 Tissues of our lives, and shimmer still amid
 The gloom and shadows of our lot. Again
 I heard thee tell of Abraham, with his constant
 Faith and earnest trust in God, unto whom
 The promise came that in his seed should all
 The nations of the earth be blessed. Of Isaac
 Blessing with disappointed lips his first born son,
 From whom the birthright had departed. Of Jacob,
 With his warm affections and his devious ways,
 Flying before the wrath of Esau ; how he
 Slumbered in the wild, and saw amid his dreams
 A ladder reaching to the sky, on which God's
 Angels did descend, and waking, with a solemn
 Awe o'ershadowing all, his soul exclaimed, 'How
 Dreadful is this place. Lo ! God is here, and I
 Knew it not.' Of Joseph, once a mighty prince
 Within this land, who shrank in holy horror
 From the soft white hand that beckoned him to sin
 Whose heart, amid the pleasures, pomp and pride
 Of Egypt, was ever faithful to his race,
 And when his life was trembling on its frailest chord
 He turned his dying eyes to Canaan, and made
 His brethren swear that they would make his grave
 Among the patriarchs of his line, because
 Machpelah's cave, where Abraham bowed before
 The sons of Heth, and bought a place to lay
 His loved and cherished dead, was dearer to his
 Dying heart than the proudest tomb amid
 The princely dead of Egypt.

Then, like the angels, mother dear, who met
 Our father Jacob on his way, thy words
 Came back as messengers of light to guide
 My steps, and I refused to be called the son
 Of Pharaoh's daughter. I saw the priests of On
 Grow pale with fear, an ashen terror creeping
 O'er the princess' face, while Pharaoh's brow grew
 Darker than the purple of his cloak. But I
 Endured, as seeing him who hides his face
 Behind the brightness of his glory.
 And thus I left the pomp and pride of Egypt
 To cast my lot among the people of my race."

FLIGHT INTO MIDIAN.—CHAPTER III

The love of Moses for his race soon found
 A stern expression. Pharaoh was building
 A pyramid; ambitious, cold and proud,
 He scrupled not at means to gain his ends.
 When he feared the growing power of Israel
 He stained his hands in children's blood, and held
 A carnival of death in Goshen; but now
 He wished to hand his name and memory
 Down unto the distant ages, and instead
 Of lading that memory with the precious
 Fragrance of the kindest deeds and words, he

Essayed to write it out in stone, as cold
And hard, and heartless as himself.

And Israel was
The fated race to whom the cruel tasks
Were given. Day after day a cry of wrong
And anguish, some dark deed of woe and crime,
Came to the ear of Moses, and he said,
"These reports are ever harrowing my soul;
I will go unto the fields where Pharaoh's
Officers exact their labors, and see
If these things be so—if they smite the feeble
At their tasks, and goad the aged on to toils
Beyond their strength—if neither age nor sex
Is spared the cruel smiting of their rods."
And Moses went to see his brethren.

'Twas eventide,
And the laborers were wending their way
Unto their lowly huts. 'Twas a sad sight,—
The young girls walked without the bounding steps
Of youth, with faces prematurely old,
As if the rosy hopes and sunny promises
Of life had never flushed their cheeks with girlish
Joy; and there were men whose faces seemed to say
We bear our lot in hopeless pain, we've bent unto
Our burdens until our shoulders fit them,
And as slaves we crouch beneath our servitude
And toil. But there were men whose souls were cast
In firmer moulds, men with dark secretive eyes,
Which seemed to say, to day we bide our time,

And hide our wrath in every nerve, and only
 Wait a fitting hour to strike the hands that press
 Us down. Then came the officers of Pharaoh;
 They trod as lords, their faces flushed with pride
 And insolence, watching the laborers
 Sadly wending their way from toil to rest.
 And Moses' heart swelled with a mighty pain; sadly,
 Musing, he sought a path that led him
 From the busy haunts of men. But even there
 The cruel wrong trod in his footsteps; he heard
 A heavy groan, then harsh and bitter words,
 And, looking back, he saw an officer
 Of Pharaoh smiting with rough and cruel hand
 An aged man. Then Moses' wrath o'erflowed
 His lips, and every nerve did tremble
 With a sense of wrong, and bounding forth he
 Cried unto the smiter, "Stay thy hand; seest thou
 That aged man? His head is whiter than our
 Desert sands; his limbs refuse to do thy
 Bidding because thy cruel tasks have drained
 Away their strength." The Egyptain raised his eyes
 With sudden wonder; who was this that dared
 dispute
 His power? Only a Hebrew youth. His
 Proud lip curved in scornful anger, and he
 Waved a menace with his hand, saying, "back
 To thy task base slave, nor dare resist the will
 Of Pharaoh." Then Moses' wrath o'erleaped the
 bounds

Of prudence, and with a heavy blow he felled
 The smiter to the earth, and Israel had
 One tyrant less. Moses saw the mortal paleness
 Chase the flushes from the Egyptian's face,
 The whitening lips that breathed no more defiance
 And the relaxing tension of the well knit limbs;
 And when he knew that he was dead, he hid
 Him in the sand and left him to his rest.

Another day Moses walked
 Abroad, and saw two brethren striving
 For mastery; and then his heart grew full
 Of tender pity. They were brethren, sharers
 Of a common wrong: should not their wrongs more
 Closely bind their hearts, and union, not division,
 Be their strength? And feeling thus, he said, "ye
 Are brethren, wherefore do ye strive together?"
 But they threw back his words in angry tones
 And asked if he had come to judge them, and would
 Mete to them the fate of the Egyptian?
 Then Moses knew the sand had failed to keep
 His secret, that his life no more was safe
 In Goshen, and he fled unto the deserts
 Of Arabia and became a shepherd
 For the priest of Midian.

CHAPTER IV.

Men grow strong in action, but in solitude
Their thoughts are ripened. Like one who cuts away
The bridge on which he has walked in safety
To the other side, so Moses cut off all retreat
To Pharaoh's throne, and did choose the calling
Most hateful to an Egyptian; he became
A shepherd, and led his flocks and herds amid
The solitudes and wilds of Midian, where he
Nursed in silent loneliness his earnest faith
In God and a constant love for kindred, tribe
And race. Years stole o'er him, but they took
No atom from his strength, nor laid one heavy
weight

Upon his shoulders. The down upon his face
Had ripened to a heavy beard; the fire
That glowed within his youthful eye had deepened
To a calm and steady light, and yet his heart
Was just as faithful to his race as when he had
Stood in Pharaoh's courts and bade farewell
Unto his daughter.

There was a look of patient waiting on his face,
A calm, grand patience, like one who had lifted
Up his eyes to God and seen, with meekened face,
The wings of some great destiny o'ershadowing
All his life with strange and solemn glory.
But the hour came when he must pass from thought
To action.—when the hope of many years

Must reach its grand fruition, and Israel's
 Great deliverance dawn. It happened thus :
 One day, as Moses led his flocks, he saw
 A fertile spot skirted by desert sands,—
 A pleasant place for flocks and herds to nip
 The tender grass and rest within its shady nooks ;
 And as he paused and turned, he saw a bush with fire
 Aglow ; from root to stem a lambent flame
 Sent up its jets and sprays of purest light,
 And yet the bush, with leaves uncrisp'd, uncurled,
 Was just as green and fresh as if the breath
 Of early spring were kissing every leaf.
 Then Moses said I'll turn aside to see
 This sight, and as he turned he heard a voice
 Bidding him lay his sandals by, for Lo ! he
 Stood on holy ground. Then Moses bowed his head
 Upon his staff and spread his mantle o'er
 His face, lest he should see the dreadful majesty
 Of God ; and there, upon that lonely spot,
 By Horeb's mount, his shrinking hands received
 The burden of his God, which bade him go
 To Egypt's guilty king, and bid him let
 The oppressed go free.

Commissioned thus

He gathered up his flocks and herds and sought
 The tents of Jethro, and said " I pray thee
 Let me go and see if yet my kindred live ;
 And Jethro bade him go in peace, nor sought
 To throw himself across the purpose of his soul.

Yet there was a tender parting in that home ;
 There were moistened eyes, and quivering lips,
 And lingering claspings of the parting hand, as Jethro
 And his daughters stood within the light of that
 Clear morn, and gave to Moses and his wife
 And sons their holy wishes and their sad farewells.
 For he had been a son and brother in that home
 Since first with manly courtesy he had filled
 The empty pails of Reuel's daughters, and found
 A shelter 'neath his tent when flying from
 The wrath of Pharaoh.

They journeyed on,
 Moses, Zipporah and sons, she looking back
 With tender love upon the home she had left,
 With all its precious memories crowding round
 Her heart, and he with eager eyes tracking
 His path across the desert, longing once more
 To see the long-lost faces of his distant home,
 The loving eyes so wont to sun him with their
 Welcome, and the aged hands that laid upon
 His youthful head their parting blessing. They
 Journeyed on till morning's flush and noonday
 Splendor glided into the softened, mellowed
 Light of eve, and the purple mists were deep'ning
 On the cliffs and hills, when Horeb, dual
 Crowned, arose before him ; and there he met
 His brother Aaron, sent by God to be
 His spokesman and to bear him company
 To Pharaoh. Tender and joyous was their greeting

They talked of home and friends until the lighter
 Ripple of their thoughts in deeper channels flowed;
 And then they talked of Israel's bondage,
 And the great deliverance about to dawn
 Upon the fortunes of their race; and Moses
 Told him of the burning bush, and how the message
 Of his God was trembling on his lips. And thus
 They talked until the risen moon had veiled
 The mount in soft and silvery light; and then
 They rested until morn, and rising up, refreshed
 From sleep, pursued their way until they reached
 The land of Goshen, and gathered up the elders
 Of their race, and told them of the message
 Of their Father's God. Then eager lips caught up
 The words of hope and passed the joyful "news
 Around, and all the people bowed their heads
 And lifted up their hearts in thankfulness
 To God."

That same day

Moses sought an audience with the king. He found
 Him on his throne surrounded by the princes
 Of his court, who bowed in lowly homage
 At his feet. And Pharaoh heard with curving lip
 And flushing cheek the message of the Hebrew's God.
 Then asked in cold and scornful tones, "Has
 Israel a God, and if so where has he dwelt
 For ages? As the highest priest of Egypt
 I have prayed to Isis, and the Nile has
 Overflowed her banks and filled the land

With plenty, but these poor slaves have cried unto
 Their God, then crept in want and sorrow
 To their graves. Surely Mizraim's God is strong
 And Israel's is weak ; then wherefore should
 I heed his voice, or at his bidding break
 A single yoke ?" Thus reasoned that proud king,
 And turned a deafened ear unto the words
 Of Moses and his brother, and yet he felt
 Strangely awed before their presence, because
 They stood as men who felt the grandeur
 Of their mission, and thought not of themselves,
 But of their message.

CHAPTER V.

On the next day Pharaoh called a council
 Of his mighty men, and before them laid
 The message of the brethren : then Amorphel,
 Keeper of the palace and nearest lord
 Unto the king, arose, and bending low
 Before the throne, craved leave to speak a word.
 Amorphel was a crafty, treacherous man,
 With oily lips well versed in flattery
 And courtly speech, a supple reed ready
 To bend before his royal master's lightest
 Breath—Pharaoh's willing tool. He said
 "Gracious king, thou has been too lenient
 With these slaves ; light as their burdens are, they

Fret and chafe beneath them. They are idle
 And the blood runs riot in their veins. Now
 If thou would'st have these people dwell in peace,
 Increase, I pray thee, their tasks and add unto
 Their burdens; if they faint beneath their added
 Tasks, they will have less time to plot sedition
 And revolt."

Then Rhadma, oldest lord in Pharaoh's court,
 Arose. He was an aged man, whose white
 And heavy beard hung low upon his breast,
 Yet there was a hard cold glitter in his eye,
 And on his face a proud and evil look.
 He had been a servant to the former king,
 And wore his signet ring upon his hand.
 He said, "I know this Moses well. Fourscore
 Years ago Princess Charmian found him
 By the Nile and rescued him from death, and did
 Choose him as her son, and had him versed in all
 The mysteries and lore of Egypt. But blood
 Will tell, and this base slave, with servile blood
 Within his veins, would rather be a servant
 Than a prince, and so, with rude and reckless hand,
 He thrust aside the honors of our dear
 Departed king. Pharaoh was justly wroth,
 But for his daughter's sake he let the trespass
 Pass. But one day this Moses slew an Egyptian
 In his wrath, and then the king did seek his life;
 But he fled, it is said, unto the deserts

Of Arabia, and became a shepherd for the priest
 Of Midian. But now, instead of leading flocks
 And herds, he aspires to lead his captive race
 To freedom. These men mean mischief; sedition
 And revolt are in their plans. Decree, I pray thee,
 That these men shall gather their own straw
 And yet their tale of bricks shall be the same."
 And these words pleased Pharaoh well, and all his
 Lords chimed in with one accord. And Pharaoh
 Wrote the stern decree and sent it unto Goshen—
 That the laborers should gather their own straw,
 And yet they should not 'minish of their tale of bricks

'Twas a sad day in Goshen;
 The king's degree hung like a gloomy pall
 Around their homes. The people fainted 'neath
 Their added tasks, then cried unto the king,
 That he would ease their burdens; but he hissed
 A taunt into their ears and said, "ye are
 Idle, and your minds are filled with vain
 And foolish thoughts; get you unto your tasks,
 And ye shall not 'minish of your tale of bricks."

And then they turned their eyes
 Reproachfully on Moses and his brother,
 And laid the cruel blame upon their shoulders.
 'Tis an old story now, but then 'twas new
 Unto the brethren,—how God's anointed ones
 Must walk with bleeding feet the paths that turn
 To lines of living light; how hands that bring
 Salvation in their palms are pierced with cruel

Nails, and lips that quiver first with some great truth
 Are steeped in bitterness and tears, and brows
 Now bright beneath the aureola of God,
 Have bent beneath the thorny crowns of earth.

There was hope for Israel,
 But they did not see the golden fringes
 Of their coming morn ; they only saw the cold,
 Grey sky, and fainted 'neath the cheerless gloom

Moses sought again the presence of the king :
 And Pharaoh's brow grew dark with wrath,
 And rising up in angry haste, he said,
 Defiantly, " If thy God be great, show
 Us some sign or token of his power."
 Then Moses threw his rod upon the floor,
 And it trembled with a sign of life ;
 The dark wood glowed, then changed into a thing
 Of glistening scales and golden rings, and green,
 And brown and purple stripes ; a hissing, hateful
 Thing, that glared its fiery eye, and darting forth
 From Moses' side, lay coiled and panting
 At the monarch's feet. With wonder open-eyed
 The king gazed on the changed rod, then called
 For his magicians—wily men, well versed
 In sinful lore—and bade them do the same.
 And they, leagued with the powers of night, did
 Also change their rods to serpents ; then Moses'
 Serpent darted forth, and with a startling hiss
 And angry gulp, he swallowed the living things

That coiled along his path. And thus did Moses
 Show that Israel's God had greater power
 Than those dark sons of night.

But not by this alone
 Did God his mighty power reveal : He changed
 Their waters ; every fountain, well and pool
 Was red with blood, and lips, all parched with thirst,
 Shrank back in horror from the crimson draughts.
 And then the worshiped Nile grew full of life :
 Millions of frogs swarmed from the stream—they
 clogged

The pathway of the priests and filled the sacred
 Fanes, and crowded into Pharaoh's bed, and hopped
 Into his trays of bread, and slumbered in his
 Ovens and his pans.

Then came another plague, of loathsome vermin ;
 They were gray and creeping things, that made
 Their very clothes alive with dark and sombre
 Spots—things so loathsome in the land they did
 Suspend the service of the temple ; for no priest
 Dared to lift his hand to any god with one
 Of these upon him. And then the sky grew
 Dark, as if a cloud were passing o'er its
 Changeless blue ; a buzzing sound broke o'er
 The city, and the land was swarmed with flies.
 The murrain laid their cattle low ; the hail
 Cut off the first fruits of the Nile ; the locusts,
 With their hungry jaws, destroyed the later crops,

And left the ground as brown and bare as if a fire
Had scorched it through,

Then angry blains
And fiery boils did blur the flesh of man
And beast; and then for three long days, nor saffron
Tint, nor crimson flush, nor soft and silvery light
Divided day from morn, nor told the passage
Of the hours; men rose not from their seats, but sat
In silent awe. That lengthened night lay like a
burden

On the air,—a darkness one might almost gather
In his hand, it was so gross and thick. Then came
The last dread plague—the death of the first born.

'Twas midnight,
And a startling shriek rose from each palace,
Home and hut of Egypt, save the blood-besprinkled
homes

Of Goshen; the midnight seemed to shiver with a
sense

Of dread, as if the mystic angels wing
Had chilled the very air with horror.
Death! Death! was everywhere—in every home
A corpse—in every heart a bitter woe.
There were anxious fingerings for the pulse
That ne'er would throb again, and eager listenings
For some sound of life—a hurrying to and fro—
Then burning kisses on the cold lips
Of the dead, bitter partings, sad farewells,
And mournful sobs and piercing shrieks,

And deep and heavy groans throughout the length
 And breadth of Egypt. 'Twas the last dread plague,
 But it had snapped in twain the chains on which
 The rust of ages lay, and Israel was freed;
 Not only freed, but thrust in eager haste
 From out the land. Trembling men stood by, and
 longed
 To see them gather up their flocks and herds,
 And household goods, and leave the land; because
 they felt
 That death stood at their doors as long as Israel
 Lingered there; and they went forth in haste,
 To tread the paths of freedom.

CHAPTER VI.

But Pharaoh was strangely blind, and turning
 From his first-born and his dead, with Egypt's wail
 Scarce still upon his ear, he asked which way had
 Israel gone? They told him that they journeyed
 Towards the mighty sea, and were encamped
 Near Baalzephn.
 Then Pharaoh said, "the wilderness will hem them in,
 The mighty sea will roll its barriers in front,
 And with my chariots and my warlike men
 I'll bring them back, or mete them out their graves."
 Then Pharaoh's officers arose
 And gathered up the armies of the king
 And made his chariots ready for pursuit.

With proud escutcheons blazoned to the sun,
 In his chariot of ivory, pearl and gold,
 Pharaoh rolled out of Egypt; and with him
 Rode his mighty men, their banners floating
 On the breeze, their spears and armor glittering
 In the morning light; and Israel saw,
 With fainting hearts, their old oppressors on their
 Track: then women wept in hopeless terror;
 Children hid their faces in their mothers' robes,
 And strong men bowed their heads in agony and
 dread;

And then a bitter, angry murmur rose,—
 "Were there no graves in Egypt, that thou hast
 Brought us here to die?"
 Then Moses lifted up his face, aglow
 With earnest faith in God, and bade their fainting
 hearts

Be strong and they should his salvation see.
 "Stand still," said Moses to the fearful throng
 Whose hearts were fainting in the wild, "Stand still."
 Ah, that was Moses' word, but higher and greater
 Came God's watchword for the hour, and not for that
 Alone, but all the coming hours of time.

"Speak ye unto the people and bid them
 Forward go; stretch thy hand across the waters
 And smite them with thy rod." And Moses smote
 The restless sea; the waves stood up in heaps,
 Then lay as calm and still as lips that just
 Had tasted death. The secret-loving sea

Laid bare her coral caves and iris-tinted
 Floor ; that wall of flood which lined the people's
 Way was God's own wondrous masonry ;
 The signal pillar sent to guide them through the wild
 Moved its dark shadow till it fronted Egypt's
 Camp, but hung in fiery splendor, a light
 To Israel's path. Madly rushed the hosts
 Of Pharaoh upon the people's track, when
 The solemn truth broke on them—that God
 For Israel fought. With cheeks in terror
 Blenching, and eyes astart with fear, " let
 Us flee," they cried, " from Israel, for their God
 Doth fight against us ; he is battling on their side."
 They had trusted in their chariots, but now
 That hope was vain ; God had loosened every
 Axle and unfastened every wheel, and each
 Face did gather blackness and each heart stood still
 With fear, as the livid lightnings glittered
 And the thunder roared and muttered on the air,
 And they saw the dreadful ruin that shuddered
 O'er their heads, for the waves began to tremble
 And the wall of flood to bend. Then arose
 A cry of terror, baffled hate and hopeless dread,
 A gurgling sound of horror, as " the waves
 Came madly dashing, wildly crashing, seeking
 Out their place again," and the flower and pride
 Of Egypt sank as lead within the sea
 Till the waves threw back their corpses cold and
 stark

Upon the shore, and the song of Israel
 Triumph was the requiem of their foes.
 Oh the grandeur of that triumph; up the cliffs
 And down the valleys, o'er the dark and restless
 Sea, rose the people's shout of triumph, going
 Up in praise to God, and the very air
 Seemed joyous for the choral song of millions
 Throbb'd upon its viewless wings.
 Then another song of triumph rose in accents
 Soft and clear; "'twas the voice of Moses' sister
 Rising in the tide of song. The warm blood
 Of her childhood seemed dancing in her veins;
 The roses of her girlhood were flushing
 On her cheek, and her eyes flashed out the splendor
 Of long departed days, for time itself seemed
 Pausing, and she lived the past again; again
 The Nile flowed by her; she was watching by the
 stream,
 A little ark of rushes where her baby brother lay;
 The tender tide of rapture swept o'er her soul again
 She had felt when Pharaoh's daughter had claimed
 Him as her own, and her mother wept for joy
 Above her rescued son. Then again she saw
 Him choosing "'twixt Israel's pain and sorrow
 And Egypt's pomp and pride." But now he stood
 Their leader triumphant on that shore, and loud
 She struck the cymbals as she led the Hebrew women
 In music, dance and song, as they shouted out
 Triumphs in sweet and glad refrains.

MIRIAM'S SONG.

A wail in the palace, a wail in the hut,
 The midnight is shivering with dread,
 And Egypt wakes up with a shriek and a sob
 To mourn for her first-born and dead.

In the morning glad voices greeted the light,
 As the Nile with its splendor was flushed;
 At midnight silence had melted their tones,
 And their music forever is hushed.

In the morning the princes of palace and court
 To the heir of the kingdom bowed down;
 'Tis midnight, pallid and stark in his shroud
 He dreams not of kingdom or crown.

As a monument blasted and blighted by God,
 Through the ages proud Pharaoh shall stand,
 All seamed with the vengeance and scarred with the writh
 That leaped from God's terrible hand.

CHAPTER VII.

They journeyed on from Zuphim's sea until
 They reached the sacred mount and heard the solemn
 Decalogue. The mount was robed in blackness,—
 Heavy and deep the shadows lay; the thunder
 Crashed and roared upon the air; the lightning
 Leaped from crag to crag; God's fearful splendor
 Flowed around, and Sinai quaked and shuddered
 To its base, and there did God proclaim
 Unto their listening ears, the great the grand,

The central and the primal truth of all
The universe—the unity of God.

Only one God,—

This truth received into the world's great life,
Not as an idle dream or speculative thing,
But as a living, vitalizing thought,
Should bind us closer to our God and link us
With our fellow man, the brothers and co-heirs
With Christ, the elder brother of our race.
Before this truth let every blade of war
Grow dull, and slavery, cowering at the light,
Skulk from the homes of men; instead
Of war bring peace and freedom, love and joy,
And light for man, instead of bondage, whips
And chains. Only one God! the strongest hands
Should help the weak who bend before the blasts
Of life, because if God is only one
Then we are the children of his mighty hand,
And when we best serve man, we also serve
Our God. Let haughty rulers learn that men
Of humblest birth and lowliest lot have
Rights as sacred and divine as theirs, and they
Who fence in leagues of earth by bonds and claims
And title deeds, forgetting land and water,
Air and light are God's own gifts and heritage
For man—who throw their selfish lives between
God's sunshine and the shivering poor—
Have never learned the wondrous depth, nor scaled
The glorious height of this great central truth,

Around which clusters all the holiest faiths
 Of earth. The thunder died upon the air,
 The lightning ceased its livid play, the smokes
 And darkness died away in clouds, as soft
 And fair as summer wreaths that lie around
 The setting sun, and Sinai stood a bare
 And rugged thing among the sacred scenes
 Of earth.

CHAPTER VIII.

It was a weary thing to bear the burden
 Of that restless and rebellious race. With
 Sinai's thunders almost crashing in their ears,
 They made a golden calf, and in the desert
 Spread an idol's feast, and sung the merry songs
 They had heard when Mizraim's songs bowed down
 before
 Their vain and heathen gods; and thus for many
 years
 Did Moses bear the evil manners of his race—
 Their angry murmurs, fierce regrets and strange
 Forgetfulness of God. Born slaves, they did not love
 The freedom of the wild more than their pots of
 flesh.
 And pleasant savory things once gathered
 From the gardens of the Nile.
 If slavery only laid its weight of chains

Upon the weary, aching limbs, e'en then
 'T were a curse ; but when it frets through nerve
 And flesh and eats into the weary soul,
 Oh then it is a thing for every human
 Heart to loathe, and this was Israel's fate ,
 For when the chains were shaken from their limbs
 They failed to strike the impress from their souls.
 While he who'd basked beneath the radiance
 Of a throne, ne'er turned regretful eyes upon
 The past, nor sighed to grasp again the pleasures
 Once resigned ; but the saddest trial was
 To see the light and joy fade from their faces
 When the faithless spies spread through their camp
 Their ill report ; and when the people wept
 In hopeless unbelief and turned their faces
 Egyptward, and asked a captain from their bands
 To lead them back where they might bind anew
 Their broken chains, when God arose and shut
 The gates of promise on their lives, and left
 Their bones to bleach beneath Arabia's desert sands
 But though they slumbered in the wild, they died
 With broader freedom on their lips, and for their
 Little ones did God reserve the heritage
 So rudely thrust aside.

THE DEATH OF MOSES.— CHAPTER LX.

His work was done ; his blessing lay
 Like precious ointment on his people's head,
 And God's great peace was resting on his soul.
 His life had been a lengthened sacrifice,
 A thing of deep devotion to his race,
 Since first he turned his eyes on Egypt's gild
 And glow, and clasped their fortunes in his hand
 And held them with a firm and constant grasp.
 But now his work was done ; his charge was laid
 In Joshua's hand, and men of younger blood
 Were destined to possess the land and pass
 Through Jordan to the other side. He too
 Had hoped to enter there—to tread the soil
 Made sacred by the memories of his
 Kindred dead, and rest till life's calm close beneath
 The sheltering vines and stately palms of that
 Fair land ; that hope had colored all his life's
 Young dreams and sent its mellowed flushes o'er
 His later years ; but God's decree was otherwise.
 And so he bowed his meekened soul in calm
 Submission to the word, which bade him climb
 To Nebo's highest peak, and view the pleasant land
 From Jordan's swells unto the calmer ripples
 Of the tideless sea, then die with all its
 Loveliness in sight.
 As he passed from Moab's grassy vale to climb

The rugged mount, the people stood in mournful
 groups,
 Some, with quivering lips and tearful eyes,
 Reaching out unconscious hands, as if to stay
 His steps and keep him ever at their side, while
 Others gazed with reverent awe upon
 The calm and solemn beauty on his aged brow,
 The look of loving trust and lofty faith
 Still beaming from an eye that neither care
 Nor time had dimmed. As he passed upward, tender
 Blessings, earnest prayers and sad farewells rose
 On each wave of air, then died in one sweet
 Murmur of regretful love; and Moses stood
 Alone on Nebo's mount.

Alone! not one

Of all that mighty throng who had trod with him
 In triumph through the parted flood was there.
 Aaron had died in Hor, with son and brother
 By his side; and Miriam too was gone.
 But kindred hands had made her grave, and Kadashah
 Held her dust. But he was all alone; nor wife
 Nor child was there to clasp in death his hand,
 And bind around their bleeding hearts the precious
 Parting words. And yet he was not all alone,
 For God's great presence flowed around his path
 And stayed him in that solemn hour.

He stood upon the highest peak of Nebo,
 And saw the Jordan chafing through its gorges,

Its banks made bright by scarlet blooms
 And purple blossoms. The placid lakes
 And emerald meadows, the snowy crest
 Of distant mountains, the ancient rocks
 That dripped with honey, the hills all bathed
 In light and beauty ; the shady groves
 And peaceful vistas, the vines opprest
 With purple riches, the fig trees fruit-crowned
 Green and golden, the pomegranates with crimson
 Blushes, the olives with their darker clusters,
 Rose before him like a vision, full of beauty
 And delight. Gazed he on the lovely landscape
 Till it faded from his view, and the wing
 Of death's sweet angel hovered o'er the mountain's
 Crest, and he heard his garments rustle through
 The watches of the night.

Then another, fairer, vision
 Broke upon his longing gaze ; 'twas the land
 Of crystal fountains, love and beauty, joy
 And light, for the pearly gates flew open,
 And his ransomed soul went in. And when morning
 O'er the mountain fringed each crag and peak with
 light,
 Cold and lifeless lay the leader. God had touched
 His eyes with slumber, giving his beloved sleep.

Oh never on that mountain
 Was seen a lovelier sight
 Than the troupe of fair young angels
 That gathered 'round the dead.

With gentle hands they bore him
 That bright and shining train,
 From Nebo's lonely mountain
 To sleep in Moab's vale.
 But they sung no mournful dirge
 No solemn requiems said,
 And the soft wave of their pinions
 Made music as they trod.
 But no one heard them passing,
 None saw their chosen grave ;
 't was the angels secret
 Where Moses should be laid.
 And when the grave was finished
 They trod with golden sandals
 Above the sacred spot,
 And the brightest, fairest flower
 Sprang up beneath their tread.
 Nor broken turf, nor hillock
 Did e'er reveal that grave,
 And truthful lips have never said
 We know where he is laid.

THE MISSION OF THE FLOWERS.

In a lovely garden, filled with fair and blooming flowers, stood a beautiful rose tree. It was the centre of attraction, and won the admiration of every eye; its beauteous flowers were sought to adorn the bridal wreath and deck the funeral bier. It was a thing of joy and beauty, and its earth mission was a blessing. Kind hands plucked its flowers to gladden the chamber of sickness and adorn the prisoner's lonely cell. Young girls wore them 'mid their clustering curls, and grave brows relaxed when they gazed upon their wondrous beauty. Now the rose was very kind and generous hearted, and, seeing how much joy she dispensed, wished that every flower could only be a rose, and like herself have the privilege of giving joy to the children of men; and while she thus mused, a bright and lovely spirit approached her and said, "I know thy wishes and will grant thy desires. Thou shalt have power to change every flower in the garden to thine own likeness. When the soft winds come wooing thy fairest buds and flowers, thou shalt breathe gently

thy sister plants, and beneath thy influence they shall change to beautiful roses." The rose tree bowed her head in silent gratitude to the gentle being who had granted her this wondrous power. All night the stars bent over her from their holy homes above, but she scarcely heeded their vigils. The gentle dews nestled in her arms and kissed the cheeks of her daughters; but she hardly noticed them;—she was waiting for the soft airs to awaken and seek her charming abode. At length the gentle airs greeted her, and she hailed them with a joyous welcome, and then commenced her work of change. The first object that met her vision was a tulip superbly arrayed in scarlet and gold. When she was aware of the intention of her neighbor, her cheeks flamed with anger, her eyes flashed indignantly, and she haughtily refused to change her proud robes for the garb the rose tree had prepared for her; but she could not resist the spell that was upon her, and she passively permitted the garments of the rose to enfold her yielding limbs. The verbenas saw the change that had fallen upon the tulip and dreading that a similar fate awaited them, crept closely to the ground, and, while tears gathered in their eyes, they felt a change pass through their sensitive frames, and instead of gentle verbenas they were blushing roses. She breathed upon the sleepy poppies; a deeper slumber fell upon their senses, and when they awoke, they too had changed to bright and beautiful roses. The heliotrope read her fate in the lot of her

sisters, and, bowing her fair head in silent sorrow, gracefully submitted to her unwelcome destiny. The violets, whose mission was to herald the approach of spring, were averse to losing their identity. "Surely," said they, "we have a mission as well as the rose;" but with heavy hearts they saw themselves changed like their sister plants. The snow drop drew around her her robes of virgin white; she would not willingly exchange them for the most brilliant attire that ever decked a flower's form; to her they were the emblems of purity and innocence; but the rose tree breathed upon her, and with a bitter sob she reluctantly consented to the change. The dahlias lifted their heads proudly and defiantly; they dreaded the change, but scorned submission; they loved the fading year, and wished to spread around his dying couch their brightest, fairest flowers; but vainly they struggled, the doom was upon them, and they could not escape. A modest lily that grew near the rose tree shrank instinctively from her; but it was in vain, and with tearful eyes and trembling limbs she yielded, while a quiver of agony convulsed her frame. The marygolds sighed submissively and made no remonstrance. The garden pinks grew careless, and submitted without a murmur, while other flowers, less fragrant or less fair, paled with sorrow or reddened with anger; but the spell of the rose tree was upon them, and every flower was changed by her power, and that once beautiful garden was over-ran with roses; it had become a perfect wilderness of

roses ; the garden had changed, but that variety which had lent it so much beauty was gone, and men grew tired of roses, for they were everywhere. The smallest violet peeping faintly from its bed would have been welcome, the humblest primrose would have been hailed with delight,—even a dandelion would have been a harbinger of joy ; and when the rose saw that the children of men were dissatisfied with the change she had made, her heart grew sad within her, and she wished the power had never been given her to change her sister plants to roses, and tears came into her eyes as she mused, when suddenly a rough wind shook her drooping form, and she opened her eyes and found that she had only been dreaming. But an important lesson had been taught ; she had learned to respect the individuality of her sister flowers, and began to see that they, as well as herself, had their own missions,—some to gladden the eye with their loveliness and thrill the soul with delight ; some to transmit fragrance to the air ; others to breathe a refining influence upon the world ; some had power to lull the aching brow and soothe the weary heart and brain into forgetfulness ; and of those whose mission she did not understand, she wisely concluded there must be some object in their creation, and resolved to be true to her own earth-mission, and lay her fairest buds and flowers upon the altars of love and truth.

THE RAGGED STOCKING.

Do you see this ragged stocking,
Here a rent and there a hole?
Each thread of this little stocking
Is woven around my soul.

Do you wish to hear my story?
Excuse me, the tears will start,
For the sight of this ragged stocking
Stirs the fountains of my heart.

You say that my home is happy;
To me 'tis earth's fairest place,
But its sunshine, peace and gladness
Back to this stocking I trace.

I was once a wretched drunkard;
Ah! you start and say not so;
But the dreadful depths I've sounded,
And I speak of what I know.

I was wild and very reckless
When I stood on manhood's brink,
And, joining with pleasure-seekers
Learned to revel and drink.

Strong drink is a raging demon,
In his hands are shame and woe;
He mocketh the strength of the mighty
And bringeth the strong man low.

The light of my home was darkened
 By the shadow of my sin ;
 And want and woe unbarr'd the door,
 And suffering entered in.

* * * * *

The streets were full one Christmas eve,
 And alive with girls and boys,
 Merrily looking through window-panes
 At bright and beautiful toys.

And throngs of parents came to buy
 The gifts that children prize,
 And homeward trudged with happy hearts,
 The love-light in their eyes.

I thought of my little Charley
 At home in his lowly bed,
 With the shadows around his life,
 And in shame I bowed my head.

I entered my home a sober man,
 My heart by remorse was wrung,
 And there in the chimney corner,
 This little stocking was hung.

Faded and worn as you see it ;
 To me 'tis a precious thing,
 And I never gaze upon it
 But unbidden tears will spring.

I began to search my pockets,
But scarcely a dime was there ;
But scanty as was the pittance,
This stocking received its share.

For a longing seized upon me
To gladden the heart of my boy,
And I bought him some cakes and candy,
And added a simple toy.

Then I knelt by this little stocking
And sobbed out an earnest prayer,
And arose with strength to wrestle
And break from the tempter's snare.

And this faded, worn-out stocking,
So pitiful once to see,
Became the wedge that broke my chain,
And a blessing brought to me.

Do you marvel then I prize it?
When each darn and seam and hole
Is linked with my soul's deliverance
From the bondage of the bowl?

And to night my wife will tell you,
Though I've houses, gold and land,
He holds no treasure more precious
Than this stocking in my hand.

THE FATAL PLEDGE.

“Pledge me with wine,” the maiden cried,
Her tones were gay and light;
“From others you have turned aside,
I claim your pledge to-night.”

The blood rushed to the young man’s cheek
Then left it deadly pale;
Beneath the witchery of her smile
He felt his courage fail.

For many years he’d been a slave
To the enchanting bowl,
Until he grasped with eager hands
The reins of self-control;

And struggled with his hated thrall,
Until he rent his chain,
And strove to stand erect and free,
And be a man again.

When others came with tempting words
He coldly turned aside,
But she who held the sparkling cup
Was his affianced bride;

And like a vision of delight,
Bright, beautiful and fair,
With thoughtless words she wove for him
The meshes of despair.

From jeweled hands he took the cup,
Nor heard the serpent's hiss ;
Nor saw beneath its ruby glow
The deadly adder's hiss.

Like waves that madly, wildly dash,
When dykes are overthrown,
The barriers of his soul gave way,
Each life with wrecks was strewn.

And she who might have reached her hand
To succor and to save,
Soon wept in hopeless agony
Above a drunkard's grave.

And bore through life with bleeding heart
Remembrance of that night,
When she had urged the tempted man
With wine to make his plight.

CHRIST'S ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM.

He had plunged into our sorrows,
And our sin had pierced his heart,
As before him loomed death's shadow,
And he knew he must depart.

But they hailed him as a victor
As he into Salem came,
And the very children shouted
Loud hosannas to his name.

But he knew behind that triumph,
Rising gladly to the sky,
Soon would come the cries of malice:
Crucify him ! Crucify !

Onward rode the blessed Saviour,
Conscious of the coming strife
Soon to break in storms of hatred
Round his dear, devoted life.

Ghastly in its fearful anguish
Rose the cross before his eyes,
But he saw the joy beyond it,
And did all the shame despise.

Joy to see the cry of scorning
Through the ages ever bright,
And the cross of shame transfigured
To a throne of love and light.

Joy to know his soul's deep travail
 Should not be a thing in vain,
 And that joy and peace should blossom
 From his agonizing pain.

THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS.

It was done, the deed of horror ;
 Christ had died upon the cross,
 And within an upper chamber
 The disciples mourned their loss.

Peter's eyes were full of anguish,
 Thinking sadly of the trial
 When his boasted self-reliance
 Ended in his Lord's denial.

Disappointment, deep and heavy,
 Shrouded every heart with gloom,
 As the hopes so fondly cherished
 Died around the garden tomb.

And they thought with shame and sorrow
 How they fled in that dark hour,
 When they saw their Lord and Master
 In the clutch of Roman power.

We had hoped, they sadly uttered,
 He would over Israel reign,
 But to-day he lies sepulchred,
 And our cherished hopes are vain.

In the humble home of Mary
Slowly waned the hours away,
'Till she rose to seek the garden
And the place where Jesus lay.

Not the cross with all its anguish
 Could her loving heart restrain,
 But the tomb she sought was empty,
 And her heart o'erflowed with pain.

To embalm my Lord and Master
To this garden I have strayed,
But, behold, I miss his body,
And I know not where he's laid.

Then a wave of strange emotion
Swept her soul, as angels said,
“Wherefore do ye seek the living
’Mid the chambers of the dead?”

Unperceived, her Lord stood by her,
 Silent witness of her grief,
 Bearing on his lips the tidings
 Sure to bring a glad relief.

But her tear-dimmed eyes were holden
When she heard the Master speak ;
Thought she, only 'tis the gardener
Asking whom her soul did seek.

Then a sudden flush of gladness
 O'er her grief-worn features spread ;
 When she knew the voice of Jesus
 All her bitter anguish fled.

Forth she reached hands in rapture.
 Touch me not, the Saviour said ;
 Take the message to my brethren,
 I have risen from the dead.

Take them words of joy and comfort,
 Which will all their mourning end ;
 To their Father and my Father,
 Tell them that I will ascend.

“Brethren, I have seen the Master :
 He is risen from the dead.”
 But like words of idle meaning
 Seemed the glorious words she said.

Soon they saw the revelation
 Which would bid their mourning cease :
 Christ, the risen, stood before them
 Breathing words of love and peace.

Timid men were changed to heroes,
 Weakness turned to wondrous might,
 And the cross became their standard,
 Luminous with love and light.

From that lonely upper chamber,
 Holding up the rugged cross,
 With a glad and bold surrender
 They encountered shame and loss.

In these days of doubt and error,
 In the conflict for the right,
 May our hearts be ever strengthened
 By the resurrection's might.

SIMON'S COUNTRYMEN.

They took away his seamless robe,
 With thorns they crowned his head,
 As harshly, fiercely cried his foes :
 " Barabbas in his stead."

The friends he loved unto the end,
 Who shared his daily bread,
 Before the storms of wrath and hate
 Forsook their Lord and fled.

To rescue men from death and sin
 He knew the awful cost,
 As wearily he bent beneath
 The burden of the cross.

When Pilate had decreed his fate,
 And Jews withheld their aid,
 Then Simon, the Cyrenean, came :
 On him the cross was laid.

Not his to smite with cruel scorn,
 Nor mock the dying one,
 That helpful man came from the land
 Kissed by the ardent sun—

The land within whose sheltering arms
 The infant Jesus lay
 When Herod vainly bared his sword
 And sought the child to slay.

Amid the calendar of saints
 We Simon's name may trace,
 On history's page thro' every age
 He bears an honored place.

He little knew that cross would change
 Unto a throne of light;
 The crown of thorns upon Christ's brow
 Would be forever bright.

Beneath the shadow of that cross
 Brave men with outstretched hands
 Have told the wondrous tale of love
 In distant heathen lands.

And yet within our favored land,
 Where Christian churches rise,
 The dark-browed sons of Africa
 Are hated and despised.

Can they who speak of Christ as King,
 And glory in his name,

Forget that Simon's countrymen
Still bear a cross of shame?

Can they forget the cruel scorn
Men shower on a race
Who treat the hues their Father gives
As emblems of disgrace?

Will they erect to God their fanes
And Christ with honor crown,
And then with cruel weights of pain
The African press down?

Oh, Christians, when we faint and bleed
In this our native land,
Reach out to us when peeled, opprest,
A kindly helping hand,
And bear aloft that sacred cross,
Bright from the distant years,
And say for Christ's and Simon's sake,
We'll wipe away your tears.

For years of sorrow, toil and pain
We'll bring you love and light,
And in the name of Christ our Lord
We'll make your pathway bright.
That seamless robe shall yet enfold
The children of the sun,
Till rich and poor and bond and free
In Christ shall all be one.

And for his sake from pride and scorn
 Our spirits shall be free,
 Till through our souls shall sound the words
 He did it unto me.

DELIVERANCE.

Rise up! rise up! Oh Israel,
 Let a spotless lamb be slain;
 The angel of death will o'er you bend
 And rend your galling chain.

Sprinkle its blood upon the posts
 And lintels of your door;
 When the angel sees the crimson spots
 Unharm'd he will pass you o'er.

Gather your flocks and herds to-night,
 Your children by your side:
 A leader from Arabia comes
 To be your friend and guide.

With girded loins and sandled feet
 Await the hour of dread,
 When Mizraim shall wildly mourn
 Her first-born and her dead.

The sons of Abraham no more
 Shall crouch 'neath Pharaoh's hand,
 Trembling with agony and dread,
 He'll thrust you from the land.

And ye shall hold in unborn years
A feast to mark this day,
When joyfully the fathers rose
And cast their chains away.

When crimson tints of morning flush
The golden gates of day,
Or gorgeous hue of even melt
In sombre shades away,

Then ye shall to your children teach
The meaning of this feast,
How from the proud oppressor's hand
Their fathers were released,

And ye shall hold through distant years
This feast with glad accord,
And children's children yet shall learn
To love and trust the Lord.

Ages have passed since Israel trod
In triumph through the sea,
And yet they hold in memory's urn
Their first great jubilee.

When Moses led the ransomed hosts,
And Miriam's song arose,
While ruin closed around the path
Of their pursuing foes.

Shall Israel thro' long varied years
These memories cherish yet,
And we who lately stood redeemed
Our broken chains forget?

Should we forget the wondrous change
That to our people came,
When justice rose and sternly plead
Our cause with sword and flame?

And led us through the storms of war
To freedom's fairer shore,
When slavery sank beneath a flood
Whose waves were human gore.

Oh, youth and maidens of the land,
Rise up with one accord,
And in the name of Christ go forth
To battle for the Lord.

Go forth, but not in crimson fields,
With fratricidal strife,
But in the name of Christ go forth
For freedom, love and life.

Go forth to follow in his steps,
Who came not to destroy,
Till wastes shall blossom as the rose,
And deserts sing for joy.

SIMON'S FEAST.

He is coming, she said, to Simon's feast,
The prophet of Galilee,
Though multitudes around him throng
In longing his face to see.

He enters the home as Simon's guest,
But he gives no welcome kiss ;
He brings no water to bathe his feet—
Why is Simon so remiss ?

The prophet's face is bright with love,
And mercy beams from his eye ;
He pities the poor, the lame and blind,
An outcast, I will draw nigh.

If a prophet, he will surely know
The guilt of my darkened years ;
With broken heart I'll seek his face,
And bathe his feet with my tears.

No holy rabbi lays his hand
In blessing on my head ;
No loving voice floats o'er the path,
The downward path I tread.

Unto the Master's side she pressed,
A penitent, frail and fair,
Rained on his feet a flood of tears,
And then wiped them with her hair.

Over the face of Simon swept
 An air of puzzled surprise;
 Can my guest a holy prophet be,
 And not this woman despise?

Christ saw the thoughts that Simon's heart
 Had written upon his face,
 Kindly turned to the sinful one
 In her sorrow and disgrace.

Where Simon only saw the stains,
 Where sin and shame were rife,
 Christ looked beneath and saw the germs
 Of a fair, outflowering life.

Like one who breaks a galling chain,
 And sets a prisoner free,
 He rent her fetters with the words,
 "Thy sins are forgiven thee."

God be praised for the gracious words
 Which came through that woman's touch
 That souls redeemed thro' God's dear Son
 May learn to love him so much;

That souls once red with guilt and crime
 May their crimson stains outgrow;
 The scarlet spots upon their lives
 Become whiter than driven snow.

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